

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Hodges Badge Co. Inc.

Rhode Island Manufacturing Extension Services

Hodges Badge Company, Inc. Improves Customer Service

Client Profile:

Hodges Badge Company Inc. is a family-owned business based in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. Since its formation in 1920, Hodges Badge has manufactured high-quality rosettes, medals, ribbons, and sashes for customers throughout the U.S. Over 12 million yards of satin ribbon is used every year to create these products. The company employs 95 people.

Situation:

Hodges Badge had been on a Lean journey for several years, working with Rhode Island Manufacturing Extension Services (RIMES), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to implement a more efficient manufacturing process. "Initially we implemented Lean Manufacturing tools, a production system that reduces cycle time, improves delivery performance and reduces work in progress (WIP), in the factory," said Rick Hodges, Hodges Badge Chief Executive Executive. "Several years after implementing Lean in the factory, we wanted to take the program and implement it throughout our organization. We began using the tools in the front office and realized amazing results." For Hodges Badge, there were as many 'un-lean' activities in its office as there were in its factory. Jennifer Hodges, Hodges Badge Customer Service Manager, wanted to change that, so she tapped RIMES for its training and expert advice. "Our customer service representatives all had different interpretations of their jobs," Jennifer said. "My main focus was getting them back to being customer service representatives and not 'Fire Fighters'."

Solution:

RIMES project manager, Susan Clark Fonseca, implemented a system of basic training focused on getting the customer service representatives to understand who they were and what their real job was. The first step in the process involved learning to work as a team and personal profiling for all of the team members. "Before RIMES training, the customer service department was a bit chaotic," Jennifer said. "Customer service is the front line for our customers to the Hodges Badge experience. I knew that we needed to bring everyone back to step one. We needed to relearn customer service." The customer service representatives started by learning each other's personality profiles using Myers Briggs. Understanding more about themselves and their communication styles, they learned where they fit in the customer service process, where their colleagues fit in the process, and how individuals can work together as a team to enhance the customer experience. "The training not only taught us about our individual personality styles, but everyone in the room began getting to know one another on a much different level. The team environment it created was an added bonus," Jennifer said. Many of the customer service representatives had been through RIMES Lean courses, and it was easy for them to use what they previously learned and apply it to our customer service flow. "We dissected the order cycle from the initial call to when the printed work order leaves the call center," said Jennifer. "We did this a number of times and each time brought out new questions about why we do certain tasks. Tasks yielding no value added did not survive those meetings. The training forced employees

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and management at Hodges Badge to look at the whole picture of customer service. "In Lean Manufacturing you only want to do tasks that add value," said Rick Hodges. "Tasks that do not help move the product out the door and to the customer are eliminated from your system." Working with RIMES has improved the company's bottom line, and the productivity gains have helped preserve margins during the economic downturn.

Results:

- * Improved hourly productivity rate by 5 percent.
- * Reduced rework.
- * Improved customer satisfaction.
- * Improved employee morale.

Testimonial:

"I would not have been able to do this without RIMES. RIMES is a great resource and really helped communicate the goals and objects we created for the customer service department."

Rick and Jennifer Hodges, President and Customer Service Manager